

Oracle 593

Chapter 593 - Floor Boss

While Jake was preparing for an arduous battle, not far away at the top of a certain volcano, an imposing black orc was also facing a worthy opponent.

"Garow, what are you doing here?" Urul chuckled evilly as he recognized the swordsman. "I thought you were too busy chasing that old necromancer. Don't tell me he defeated you?"

He wasn't worried at all. Compared to a few hours ago, the spectacular Garow had lost his poise. His long-sleeved coat hiding his hands was a distant memory, and even his tight-fitting black armour was a wreck good for the garbage. A long gash now crossed his face, its repulsive sight reminiscent of a cauterized red-hot wound.

His long aquamarine sword, however, still hung faithfully on his belt.

Perceiving the orc's mocking tone, the young warrior's starry double-pupil-filled irises rested coldly on him.

"I smell despair on you, but it is not from you, but from the souls you have consumed." Garow proclaimed regally as he slowly drew his sword, a murderous aura surging wildly from his body. "Those who spread evil like you... must be eradicated... no matter what the cost."

The smirk faded from the black orc's face, and a hard, icy expression transformed his features. When he opened his mouth, the words that flowed out were closer to the growl of a ferocious beast than that of a civilized humanoid,

"I have nothing against you, Garow, but if you dare to stand in my way... I will not hesitate to kill you. I'm not puny and arrogant like that Nelekai jerk. When I strike, I don't miss."

"Oh?" The human's eyes widened slightly as he perceived the incredible confidence behind that statement.

Far from intimidating him, it only strengthened his desire to fight this orc. His fight against Nelekai had been unsatisfactory and prematurely interrupted, but he hoped this one would give him full satisfaction.

Unfortunately, it was all a dream as long as the main troublemaker was still running free.

ROOOOOAAAAARRR!

"Sigh... There it goes again..." Garow shook his head with a weary, dejected look on his face. Unmotivated, he put away his sword and walked off in a downcast manner in another direction, completely ignoring the orc.

Urul's expression also changed upon hearing the roar.

"A Dungeon Boss? But why is it so strong? I can feel its Aether fluctuation from here!"

He had his reasons to be shocked. On the way, he had personally taken out a Boss from the second and third floor. These monsters were several notches above their fellows, so much so that it was scary, but not for Urul.

With his strength, the orc was confident he could take out the bosses on the fourth and maybe even fifth floor without worry. After all, he was in the top tier of Sixth-Ordeal Evolvers, his equipment was excellent, and he had collected a considerable number of Souls since entering the Dungeon. His current power had far surpassed that of the day before. That was part of the reason why he was so confident in facing Garow.

"Idiot." The swordsman spat with disdain. "He's not just a Boss, but a Floor Boss. In the previous floors there were many passages to the lower floors. The Bosses you defeated were just their guards. Maybe you felt amazing, but you didn't accomplish anything. The rules are different here. There is only one volcano leading to the fifth floor. In other words, there's only one Boss. The Floor Boss.

Urul sensed that there was something fishy about this speech. Wanting an explanation, he shouted at Garow.

"Even if that's the case, we're here for the Nexus, right? If we can't defeat a simple Digestor that the Dungeon created, what are we all doing here?!"

The swordsman turned his head towards him and gave him a baleful look,

"I return the question to you. I don't know. You're too late anyway. The others are too far ahead of you."

ROOOOARR!

The monster was closing in fast. Wanting a real answer, Urul stopped the swordsman by firmly gripping his shoulder, but this was not to the liking of this human. Frowning imperceptibly, Garow pulled away with a sudden jerk of his torso and started walking again. This time the orc did not try to stop him.

Just before he blended into the background to reach another volcano, Garow sent him a telepathic warning,

'If you want your answer, fight it. Who knows? Maybe you're as strong as you think you are and the rest of us are incompetent.'

Urul hesitated for a long time about attacking Garow, but he gave up. A third roar, even closer than the previous one, made him realize that it was too late to run away anyway. He had never intended to anyway.

"If I can't kill you, I can at least see what you're made of."

At last the Floor Boss appeared and if the black orc was slightly surprised by his appearance, it didn't shake his thirst for battle. In doing so, however, he did not realize that he was playing into the hands of those other High-rank Evolvers who were waiting for their chance to slip in unnoticed.

Bang! Bang! Bang...

Jake was as focused as ever, a bead of sweat dripping from his forehead as he poured all his energy into keeping his shield intact. The thing swimming in the lava had become more and more aggressive and

daring as the seconds passed and he had already intercepted several hundred lava bullets and other even more vicious and destructive projectiles.

Melkree had already been buried under a thick layer of bark and looked more like a Treant than a Dryad. Even so, the smell of burning wood was spreading rapidly through their protective little bubble and even Crunch was panting heavily to get rid of the excess heat. The turkey had already passed out. Without Jake's protection he would have died by now.

It was true that Jake could not avoid his own Bloodline/Aether Spells. It was like a human shooting another human with a gun at close range. He could, of course, anticipate these attacks to some extent, but the circumstances were different. Here he had to protect his comrades as well.

If he was alone, he could easily defend himself. His Silver Stone Skin was more than enough to resist his Lava Bullets and Wind Blades. It was as if a normal human had an inch or two of pure steel coating on his skin to protect him from a single bullet.

Yet there was nothing he could do for his allies except waste his Aether Core energy and stamina. Jake seemed tireless, but that was because he relied mostly on his telekinesis, the power of which was fixed and proportional to his mental strength and physical abilities. The truth was that telekinesis wasn't an Aether Spell per se. He couldn't increase its power on a whim.

His Aether Core could power his other Bloodline Spells, including his Heat, Radiation and Earth Control, but compared to his Aether stats, his Aether Core wasn't worth mentioning. By spreading his mind around a few meters, he could easily pick up as much if not more Aether to power his spells.

Jake could speed up his rotation to draw Aether toward him to some extent, which he was already doing, but it also meant that ultimately the flow of Aether available for his spells was fixed. When an enemy managed to force him to mobilize both his Telekinesis and Aether Core to their maximum power, he was left with only a couple of options to increase the power of his magic.

The first was what the Novice Aether Manipulation Manual called Aether Core Reversing. By reversing the rotation of the Aether Core and greedily pulling on it with his Spirit Body, it was possible to forcibly extract the Aether absorbed throughout his cultivation. Instead of settling for the crumbs that the Aether Core deigned to radiate, he could then access the millions, billions of Aether points that the Aether Core had gobbled up in order to release a meager dividend of 406 points.

For obvious reasons, this was his last choice. It was, however, the main reason why the Aetherists were so feared. If they were pushed to their limits, they could do crazy things. The older they got, the more dizzying the accumulation of Aether became.

The second solution was to provide the energy required for his Aether and Bloodline Spells by drawing on his own body and his environment. At level 3, his Heat, Radiation and Earth Control allowed him to absorb and control these energy sources to feed his cells or cast other spells.

The third solution was Bloodline Ignition, which would instantly double the power of his Bloodline but at the cost of extreme cellular and mental stress as well as a slight change in character... Jake could endure these side effects to some extent, but he preferred to reserve this for the most urgent situations.

Beyond these three solutions, he still had as internal resources the Aether stored in his Aether Soul Core and cells and as external resources his Aether Sun Core and Purgatory.

Right now, Jake was using a mixture of the second and third solutions. He had begun to sacrifice his stamina to strengthen his control of the lava around him. In addition to the telekinetic barrier, any lava entering within ten meters would immediately fall under his control. That was why, even with their extreme inertia, no lava bullets had managed to get past his shield.

But this plan could not last forever. No matter how good his control of the lava was, he could not make the heat disappear. His body had a conversion limit, and if he tried to cool the lava by absorbing that heat into his own body, he might succeed, but his body would become hot as a sun, ruining the very purpose of his action.

When even Crunch began to suffocate, Jake made his decision. A small object resembling a mini city appeared in his hand and he mouthed,

"Let's see if this 7th generation spaceship is as cool as it sounds."